

GUIDELINES ON CHARACTERIZATION OF SERVICE

1. General Guidance. Characterization of service incident to separation for cause will be based on the officer's record of performance and conduct including particularly the acts or omissions giving rise to separation for cause.

a. When the separation is solely for reasons constituting substandard performance of duty or solely for removal of ecclesiastical endorsement, the characterization must be Honorable.

b. The serious nature of misconduct and moral or professional dereliction on the part of a commissioned officer requires that the separation normally be under Other Than Honorable Conditions. However, characterization as General (Under Honorable Conditions) may be warranted under the guidelines below. Characterization as Honorable is not authorized unless the officer's record is otherwise so meritorious that under the particular circumstances any other characterization would be clearly inappropriate.

c. When separation is for reasons of national security, the characterization should be based on the seriousness of the acts or omissions and the guidelines below.

2. Characterization of Service

a. Honorable. An officer whose quality of service has generally met the standards of acceptable conduct and performance of duty for officers of the Naval Service, or is otherwise so meritorious that any other characterization would be clearly inappropriate, shall have his or her service characterized as Honorable.

b. General (Under Honorable Conditions). If an officer's service has been honest and faithful but significant negative aspects of the officer's conduct or performance of duty outweigh the positive aspects of the officer's military record, it is appropriate to characterize that service as General (Under Honorable Conditions).

c. Under Other Than Honorable Conditions. This characterization is appropriate when the officer's conduct or performance of duty, particularly the acts or omissions that give

13 DEC 1998

rise to the reasons for separation, constitute a significant departure from that required of an officer of the Naval Service. Examples of such conduct or performance include acts or omissions which, under military law, are punishable by confinement for 6 months or more; abuse of a special position of trust; an act or acts which bring discredit upon the armed services; disregard by a superior of customary superior-subordinate relationships; acts or omissions that adversely affect the ability of the military unit or the organization to maintain discipline, good order, and morale or endanger the security of the United States or the health and welfare of other members of the Armed Forces; and deliberate acts or omissions that seriously endanger the capability, security, or safety of the military unit or health and safety of other persons.

d. Limitations

(1) Service will be characterized as Honorable when the grounds for separation are based solely on preservice activities, other than intentional misrepresentation, or omission of facts, in obtaining an appointment or in official statements or records.

(2) Service will be characterized as Honorable when the sole reason for discharge is personal abuse of drugs, as defined in reference (f), and the evidence of the unlawful drug involvement is developed as a result of the officer's volunteering for treatment under a self-referral program for treatment of drug abuse in accordance with reference (f).

(3) Conduct in the civilian community of a member of a Reserve component who is not on active duty or active duty for training may form the basis for characterization as Under Other Than Honorable Conditions only if such conduct affects directly the performance of the member's military duties. Such conduct may form the basis for characterization as General (Under Honorable Conditions) only if such conduct has an adverse impact on the overall effectiveness of the Naval Service, including military morale and efficiency. If a member tests positive for the presence of illegal drugs in the member's body while in an active or inactive duty status, the member's drug abuse shall be deemed to have affected directly his/her readiness and performance of military duties.

e. Service will be characterized as Honorable or General (Under Honorable Conditions), consistent with the guidance in

13 DEC 1999

paragraphs 1 and 2, when the sole basis for separation is homosexual conduct unless aggravated acts are included in the findings. A separation under Other Than Honorable Conditions may be issued if there is a finding that the officer attempted, solicited, or committed a homosexual act:

- (1) By using force, coercion, or intimidation;
- (2) With a person under 16 years of age;
- (3) With a subordinate in circumstances that violate customary military superior-subordinate relationships;
- (4) Openly in public view;
- (5) For compensation;
- (6) Aboard a military vessel or aircraft; or
- (7) In another location subject to military control, under aggravating circumstances noted in the finding, that have an adverse impact on discipline, good order, or morale comparable to the impact of such activity aboard a military vessel or aircraft.